

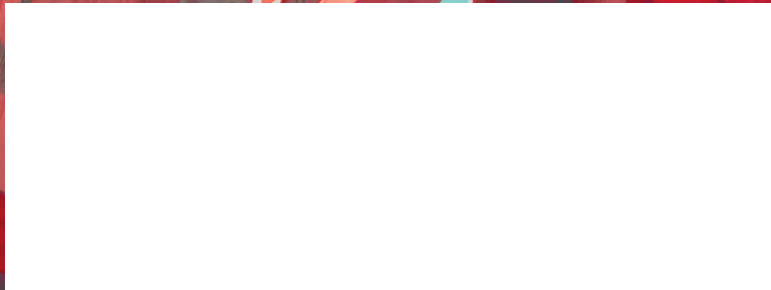
TEXAS REALTOR®

Succeed in Texas Real Estate

September/October 2018 \$3.50

TEXAS REBUILDS

A year after Hurricane Harvey,
Texas REALTORS® and their
communities prove resilient
p. 14





My
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by Michael Schrantz

Texas REALTOR® magazine traveled from the Coastal Bend to the Golden Triangle to trace the impacts of Hurricane Harvey a year later.



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FROM THE AUGUST TREC MEETING**

The Texas Real Estate Commission met in early August. Here are a few actions from TREC's meeting you should know about.



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INSIGHTS



Chairman

“ One of the many things that make me proud to be a Texan is our resiliency.

This time a year ago, Texans in the path of Harvey were beginning their journey to recovery. Even though their lives were upended, they woke up every morning determined to rebuild their homes and communities.

During the storm, some people who had lost everything didn't spend much time dwelling on it because they were too busy rescuing their

neighbors. People from other parts of Texas—and REALTORS® from around the country—stepped up to provide people the support they sorely needed.

While many of those affected by Harvey are on a steady road to recovery, some are still working to put their lives, homes, and businesses back together.

**WHAT UNITES
ALL TEXANS IS
OUR RESILIENCE.
LET'S USE IT TO
SUPPORT OUR
FELLOW REALTORS®.**

Even a year later, I'm still awestruck by the resiliency so many of our fellow Texans and REALTORS® show in the face of adversity.

You can see that resilience yourself if you read this month's cover story on page 14. *Texas REALTOR®* Social Media Editor Michael Schrantz traveled to areas hit by Harvey and met with REALTORS® one year after the storm to find out how they and their communities are doing.

While I hope none of us ever face another Harvey, we all know it's possible. As I'm writing this, we're watching what's happening on the East Coast as well as other weather threats that could affect Texas. Since Texans know firsthand the devastation of a natural disaster, there are two things I'd like you to do:

First, return the kindness we received during Harvey by donating to the REALTORS® Relief Foundation. This NAR foundation gives 100% of its received funds directly to disaster-relief causes. Learn more at nar.realtor/relief.

Second, make sure you, your business, and your family are prepared for a disaster. You'll get some interesting insights from the members featured in the cover story, but it's also worth exploring the many free resources available through services like the American Red Cross. I encourage you to do your research and get your own disaster plan in place.

Let's share our resilient nature and find ways to support our fellow REALTORS® now and in the future. ”

—Kaki Lybbert



LEARN HOW
REALTORS® PROPERTY
RESOURCE MAKES
YOU MORE EFFICIENT
AND MARKETABLE

Use RPR to nail your next
listing presentation

Sellers want to know your listing presentation is based on knowledge of the market, expertise in determining value, and your ability to close the deal at the highest price. The Texas-specific REALTORS® Property Resource webinar on October 10 will highlight how RPR helps you prepare for your listing presentation with:

- Research on the property, neighborhood, and local market
- Validating the property's basic facts, selecting comps, and adjusting those comps to create a customized and flexible comp analysis
- Using the REALTOR® Valuation Model®—an exclusive RPR pricing tool
- Generating a customized, client-friendly seller's report.

Get leads and increase your ROI with RPR

Marketing your real estate business to a neighborhood can bring you more business, but how do you choose a farm area? What type of data will you deliver to homeowners? And how will you prepare to answer their questions? Try RPR. The November 14 Texas-specific webinar will teach you how to:

- Calculate the marketability of your target zone
- Create a customized farm area using search tools and maps
- Build brand awareness with reports that attract homeowners' interest.

Register for these webinars or watch recordings from past workshops at blog.narrpr.com/tar.

REALTORS® IN WACO EARN VICTORY AGAINST LANDFILL EXPANSION

The Waco Association of REALTORS® saw a great victory in August after successfully engaging in a years-long fight against a proposed landfill in a controversial location.

The Waco City Council sought to develop an expansion of its existing landfill, which is near several high-growth residential neighborhoods, as well as Lake Waco, McGregor Executive Airport, and numerous schools and businesses.

“The location under consideration was in one of the fastest-growing areas in our community. A landfill there would have had detrimental effects on property values and quality of life,” said Trish Griffin, 2018 president of the Waco Association of REALTORS®.

REALTORS® in Waco were among a coalition of local stakeholders who fought to ensure the city stuck to its decades-old agreement with area property owners not to expand the current landfill site.

Using resources and funding from TAR’s Issues Mobilization program, REALTORS® educated city council members about the detrimental effects the proposed site would have on the community, and called upon city residents to reach out to their council members to find a better solution.

In August, the Waco City Council abandoned plans for the expanded site and approved an alternate site for the new landfill.

Contact your TAR field representative if an issue in your community could have wider implications for Texas REALTORS® or property owners. TAR’s Issues Mobilization program may be able to help. Learn more by searching “Issues Mobilization” at texasrealestate.com.

THE ISSUES MOBILIZATION PROGRAM MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE TO HELP US INFORM THE PUBLIC AND WIN THIS FIGHT ON BEHALF OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

Trish Griffin, 2018 Waco Association of REALTORS® president

2 NEW MEMBER BENEFITS YOU’LL LOVE



Looking to save on travel and fun? Check out the member-only discounts at Schlitterbahn and BookingCommunity—available exclusively to Texas REALTORS® and affiliates.

Schlitterbahn Waterparks and Resorts

Get discounts on admission, season passes, retail, food and beverage items, and accommodations at Schlitterbahn properties in Corpus Christi, Galveston, Kansas City, New Braunfels, and South Padre Island.

BookingCommunity Hotel Discounts

Choose from unpublished rates that are up to 70% off at 800,000 hotels and resorts worldwide.

Your Texas Association of REALTORS® membership includes other travel benefits, too. See them all—along with the rest of your member benefits—at texasrealestate.com/benefits.

REBRANDING EFFORTS UNDERWAY

To better align the state association with those we represent, the Texas Association of REALTORS® is refreshing its brand. Part of that refreshed brand will be a name change from the Texas Association of REALTORS® to Texas REALTORS®.

Extensive research and feedback contributed to the brand strategy. Multiple surveys collected more than 1,000 responses from consumers and more than 6,600 responses from members about how to best represent the association’s mission and contribute to members’ success.

A soft launch of a new brand is expected before January 1, and we will provide further updates throughout the process.

Many thanks to those who have invested their time in this process, especially those members volunteering on our brand advisory group.

BRAND ADVISORY GROUP

- Ward Arendt, Houston
- Linda Bastraw, El Paso
- Sandy Bednar, Austin
- Cindi Bulla, Amarillo
- Jef Conn, Lubbock
- David Alan Cox, Collin County
- Christy Gessler, Williamson County
- Mary Ann Jeffers, San Antonio
- Larry Johnson, Arlington
- Kendra Norwood, MetroTex
- Marcus Phipps, Harlingen
- Deborah Spangler, Houston

REALTOR® feedback

THE OPTION FEE, CONTRACT AMENDMENTS, LAPTOP REPAIR, AND INFO FOR CLIENTS

A question on the *Advice for REALTORS®* blog about whether a seller can terminate a contract if the buyer doesn't accept his amendment triggered a comment from **Lenora Goff** of Houston.

"This, to me, is one of the many things about our contracts that warrants a conversation with your clients, be they sellers or buyers. In Texas, we are blessed with great contracts. Let's do our jobs well by helping our clients understand that the contracts are legal and binding. Using an article like this is a good place to start when discussing things like repair amendments with either party."

Billy Waddell of Temple-Belton posted on the TAR Facebook page, looking for help with his slow laptop. He received a recommendation from Ashley Rathburn, the association's member benefits manager, about benefits partner Tech Team One: "They removed 82 malware programs and files during two scans," said Waddell. "TAR members get a discount off the regular \$99 price to \$80. My computer flies now."

Recent blog posts about the option fee prompted comments from many Texas REALTORS®. **Dena Davis** of Austin floated the idea of replacing the option period with a pre-determined buyer-inspection period: "The amount of money paid to the sellers is not enough to really compensate them for pulling the property off the market. Then all this business about receipting an option check would go away. It just provides one more thing for the lender to verify as well. Many times, the buyers have to show that the option check was cashed because those funds are credited toward their closing. This just does not need to happen in the first place."

Marcia Livingston of Houston commented on a blog post about paying to extend an option period: "While putting a dollar amount might not seem logical, attorneys tell us that 'valuable consideration' is legally important here to be sure the contract is enforceable. I wouldn't take the risk of ignoring that and putting my clients at risk."

If you're looking for information to share with your clients, check out the *Current Topics* blog. **Cathy Harris** of Rockwall liked what she found: "Wow! '64 Numbers you Shouldn't Ignore' is a very useful article. I wish I had this when I remodeled my kitchen and baths last year. I will definitely share this with clients."

Have an opinion about these subjects or another real estate topic? Of course you do. Share it on the *Advice for REALTORS®* blog (texasrealestate.com/blog), the TAR Facebook page (facebook.com/texasrealtors), or the for-clients *Current Topics* blog (texasrealestate.com/currenttopics).

YOUR ELECTION DAY VOTING GUIDE IS READY

Texas REALTORS® are heavily engaged in supporting pro-real estate candidates in the November 6 general election ... and we have a simple way to see the REALTOR®-supported candidates on *your* ballot.

Just log in at texasrealtorssupport.com, where you can ...

- Input your address for your personalized voter guide
- See the full list of REALTOR®-supported candidates
- Check out the Hot List of races to watch.



YOU DID IT: NFIP HAS BEEN EXTENDED

In the strongest response from any state, **16,398** Texas REALTORS®—that's **21.49%** of Texas Association of REALTORS® members—responded to the REALTOR® call for action on the National Flood Insurance Program this summer.

The CFA goal was simple but critical: Urge Congress to renew the program and protect hundreds of thousands of homes that would be at risk if the program were to lapse.

And your overwhelming response worked!

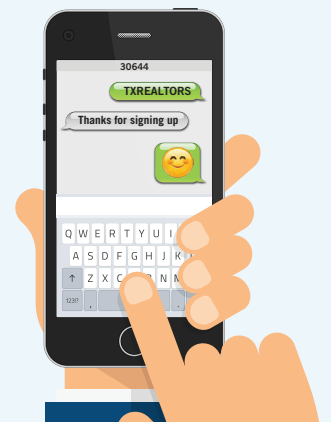
The NFIP was set to expire July 31 but legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the president extended the program to Nov. 30, 2018.

NAR will continue working with Congress to improve the program and ensure its long-term sustainability as reauthorization discussions continue later this year.

The most common reason cited by REALTORS® who don't respond to calls for action is, "I never saw the email."

NAR's REALTOR® Party Mobile Alerts program can help. This text-message notification system is dedicated to getting the word out when a call for action launches.

Sign up for the program now and get a chance at \$1,000! Just text **txrealtors** to **30644** by October 21 to enter to win—and you'll be signed up to receive important, timely alerts. See the complete rules at texasrealestate.com/text.



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BUSINESS



WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM SOMEONE WHO'S CLOSED 4 BITCOIN TRANSACTIONS

In 2017, Sheryl Lowe of Kuper Sotheby's International Realty in Austin helped four different buyers purchase homes using bitcoin, a digital currency that exists separate of any government or central bank.

Lowe didn't know she would be handling her first bitcoin transaction until she asked the buyer about whether he intended to pay cash or get a loan.

"He said, 'Well, it really is cash,'" Lowe says. When she said he'd need to verify the funds were available, he went to his briefcase and took out about four pages of codes written on paper. "I'll be paying with bitcoin," the buyer told Lowe. Since then, Lowe's first transaction has been featured in national news media and she's helped more buyers branch into real estate with their digital fortunes.

Although she'd already heard about bitcoin before that first transaction, she watched webinars and read books to better understand the currency and what would be involved for her buyer.

Having an open-minded listing agent and seller was vital to a successful transaction, Lowe says. Her first buyer even met with the seller to further explain the process and put all parties at ease.

It also helped having a title company that accommodated the process and extra legwork involved with converting bitcoin to cash for the seller. There are fees associated with that conversion, Lowe says, but in her experience, the buyer typically covers those fees.

Lowe says the rest of a bitcoin trans-

action works in much the same way as a typical cash purchase and that parties must still follow the law.

While the most activity involving bitcoin came when it reached a price of nearly \$18,000 per bitcoin at the end of 2017, Lowe says she anticipates more diversification into real estate from bitcoin owners.

3 THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT VIRTUAL CURRENCY

The value fluctuates. The value of one bitcoin can change on a day-to-day basis. For example, one bitcoin was worth \$6,611.79 on July 2; \$6,216.29 on July 13; \$8,436.12 on July 24; and \$7,574.53 on August 2.

It's taxable. The U.S. government treats bitcoin and other virtual currency as property, which includes paying capital gains tax on property transactions. Find more information at irs.gov/newsroom/irs-reminds-taxpayers-to-report-virtual-currency-transactions.

It may take a little more work. Not all participants in a transaction will be comfortable working with virtual currency. Buyers or sellers who aren't familiar with it may need more information; your client may need to shop around for the right title company; and buyers who need additional financing may have a hard time finding a traditional loan.

Commercial CERTIFIED-GREEN BUILDINGS HELP THE ENVIRONMENT—AND WORKERS' COGNITIVE ABILITY

A study conducted by researchers at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and SUNY-Upstate Medical School published in *Building and Environment* last March found that employees working in certified-green buildings did better at cognitive tasks than employees in non-certified green buildings. Even when researchers controlled for annual earnings, job category, and education level, certified-green-building workers scored 26.4% higher on cognitive function tests.

Over the years, research has shown that

indoor air quality, thermal conditions, and lighting are all factors in workers' cognitive function, but the study's researchers posit that green-certified buildings may provide additional benefits. This finding also led the researchers to propose the concept of "buildingomics," a holistic approach to studying all the ways indoor environments can affect human health through multidisciplinary teams including building scientists, epidemiologists, architects, designers, and social/behavioral scientists.



YOUNGER RETIREES LOOK BEYOND GOLF COURSES

A nationwide survey of thousands of prospective homebuyers born in the 1940s and '50s revealed differences among amenity preferences between the groups.

While the older cohort ranked golf-cart trails as its top park preference (with 53% requesting the amenity), those born in the '50s preferred dog parks (56%) and personal organic gardens (49%) over golf-cart trails (47%), according to the survey, which was conducted by John Burns Real Estate Consulting through a network of builders and developers.



GROW YOUR BUSINESS BY JOINING A NETWORKING GROUP

by Ron Hunt

REALTORS® ARE NOTORIOUS FOR KNOWING A LOT OF PEOPLE, but many REALTORS® assume their sphere of influence will produce endless leads without much effort. Although that might work sometimes, diverse lead-generation systems are crucial for longevity in this business. Networking is part of that, but it's time to start thinking about networking in a new way.

Networking events probably come to mind when you think of networking. Those one-off meetings have benefits, but a networking *group* can truly help you prosper. Though there are various forms of networking groups, look for one that meets once a week with professionals who have a desire to connect, provide referrals, and share ideas for mutually inclusive business principles.

Here's how you can elevate your lead-generation process by getting involved in a networking group.

Go local. Established local entrepreneurs and business leaders have influence in the community. Find a group in your community, or consider launching your own. Look among industries that have good synergy already, and get shoulder to shoulder with influential and passionate people—not the “What’s in it for me?” types.

Find groups of like-minded people. Referrals fly within groups where the members share similar goals, where everyone has a like-minded M.O., and where members truly connect and share.

Look for limited-membership groups. The membership of the group should be

industry-exclusive—one REALTOR®, one chiropractor, one lender, and so forth. Getting involved in a group where you are *the* real estate authority will be most beneficial for your business.

Evaluate the group’s leadership. The ideal networking group is based on a proven model where leadership is evident. The best groups have a structured agenda, designated leadership roles, opportunities for members to contribute, and a professional-development component of each meeting. If a group just gathers for coffee, lunch, or after-hours drinks with no set format or opportunity for professional development, its lifespan is limited.

Be a lead-giver. We all want more leads, more business, and more clients. The best members of a networking group are those who put giving first. The more you sow, the more you reap. In the words of Zig Ziglar, “You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want.”

Get involved for the long term. Relationships develop over time. Regularly attending your group is your best investment. Be consistent about meeting at the same time on the same day every week. This allows you to stay top of mind with local business leaders and entrepreneurs. It’s an appointment you make, and it’s one you can’t afford to miss.

RON HUNT has led *The Hunt Team* in Collin County for more than 16 years. He launched the *McKinney Business Alliance* more than five years ago and currently serves as the new member advisor. Contact him at ron@ronhunt.com or 214-228-1784.



HOW AUCTIONS CAN GIVE YOUR LISTINGS GLOBAL REACH

According to Texas real estate license holder and licensed auctioneer Yi Meggie Mei, auctions are the preferred way to buy and sell real estate globally. In the auction process, the seller holds prospective buyers' attention, controls the terms, gets competition between buyers, and can easily facilitate 1031 exchanges, while buyers avoid prolonged negotiation, know they're getting a competitive price, and can bid and close from anywhere.

Moreover, the auction process can work in tandem with the traditional real estate transaction process, according to Mei. When working with sellers represented by a REALTOR®, the auction agreement becomes an amendment to the listing agreement, with the closing and other aspects of the transaction still being handled by the REALTOR®. "All the paperwork is going to be the same as usual," Mei says. "It's just the way we sell the property that's different."

The marketing for an auction also works alongside traditional real estate marketing plans. "The

majority of a traditional marketing plan is localized," Mei says. "On the auction side, we tend to expose the property to a larger audience, depending on what type of buyer we want to market to." Auction marketing can be local, national, and global, according to Mei, utilizing a variety of tools to reach high net-worth individuals and investment groups through private databases and other means.

The auction process can be suitable for many property types, according to Mei, but ideal candidates may be high-demand listings, those with urgency to sell, real estate owned properties, or unique listings. And whereas the traditional transaction cycle could take 90 to 360 days, the auction cycle is typically between 60 to 90 days from the initial marketing plan to the auction date.

Learn more about the global appeal of auctions by watching the full webinar in the Global and Commercial playlist on the association's YouTube channel at youtube.com/texasrealtors.

TEXAS HOMEBUYERS ARE INTERESTED IN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY



Real estate apps and websites, video home tours, and augmented reality are all options homebuyers would use in their property search, according to Bank of America's *2018 Homebuyer Insights Report*.

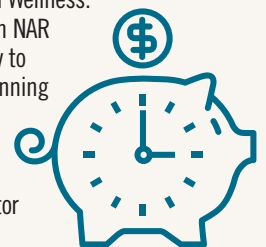
Consumers in Austin and Dallas-Fort Worth were asked about what types of emerging technology they think will be common in the next 10 years.

- Three out of four believe smart home and energy-efficient features will be standard in new construction.
- More than half believe mortgage applications will be entirely paperless.
- One in four believe open houses will only be through virtual reality.
- About 6% believe all appraisals will be done via drones.

FINANCIAL PLANNING THAT FITS YOU

More than 40% of REALTORS® aren't prepared for a financial emergency. Forty-three percent aren't saving for retirement. Get budgeting tools, retirement planning resources, and investing options to secure your financial future at the Center for REALTOR® Financial Wellness.

This new resource from NAR is designed exclusively to meet the financial planning needs of REALTORS® at any stage of your career. Visit financialwellness.realtor to get started.



E&O CASE STUDY: WHEN THE WELL WATER ISN'T ENOUGH

What you can learn from a real situation where an agent's misstep resulted in a \$20,000 settlement.

by **Chad Wenzelspratt**
and **Lee Santos**

A real estate agent listed a home that received its water supply from a well. According to the listing agent, the seller claimed that the well produced an adequate water supply and had no problems with water quality. The buyer was interested in purchasing the residential property for his family, but had concerns about the well.

The buyer's agent passed this information on to the buyer. However, the buyer's family was much larger than the seller's.

After taking possession of the property, the buyer quickly discovered the water production from the well could not support increased consumption from bathing and laundry. The water production diminished, and the buyer had to drill another well.

The mistake

The listing agent assumed he knew the buyer's needs. He failed to consider the size of the buyer's family and should have recommended the buyer have the well independently tested.

The buyer filed suit against the listing agent and the seller. An independent test of the well and the water determined that there was an elevated level of bacteria in the water. A new well was drilled, and the buyer eventually settled with the seller and agent for \$20,000, plus attorney fees.



How to reduce your risk

In making representations based on assumptions, you may be putting yourself at risk for litigation if your representations are perceived as being untruthful at a later time.

If water production tests yield certain gallons per minute, that should be represented. Always recommend the buyer hire an independent source to verify the information, and document your recommendations. This will go a long way in removing any perception of deceit and also transfer the risk of litigation to another party.

Additionally, a well inspection may lead to the detection of other environmental hazards, such as underground storage tanks.

As in this case, contaminated water can involve significant expenditure if clean water has to be delivered to maintain the property's legal occupancy.

CHAD WENZELSPRATT, CIC, is a senior account executive for Pearl Insurance, a TAR errors and omissions risk-management partner.

LEE SANTOS is senior claim specialist-director account management at XL Catlin.

WHERE SHOULD THE LINK TO THE IABS FORM GO IN AN EMAIL? ABOVE THE SIGNATURE LINE.

If you choose to provide a link to a completed *Information About Brokerage Services* notice (TAR 2501, TREC IABS 1-0) in your email, it must go in the body of your email. The body of the email is the part above your name and contact information in your signature block.

A completed form has all the information about your real estate practice, including your license number, email address, and phone number.

Not sure how to link to your completed form? Go to facebook.com/texasrealtors/videos and search for the April 2016 *Texas REALTOR*® Magazine Minute video to learn how.

LEGAL & ETHICS

Members-only forms

When your seller accepts an offer that's contingent on the sale of the buyer's current home, there's always the chance a better offer will come in. Under the terms of the *Addendum for Sale of Other Property by Buyer* (TAR 1908, TREC 10-6), if the seller accepts another written offer, she can require the buyer to waive his contingency. Otherwise, the first contract will terminate with the earnest money being refunded to the buyer. A form exclusively for Texas REALTORS® is available for this situation: *Notices Regarding Contingency Under Addendum for Sale of Other Property by Buyer* (TAR 1912). This notice informs the buyer that the seller has accepted another offer and that the buyer must now waive the contingency and deposit additional earnest money with the escrow agent or the contract will terminate.

This is one of 136 forms available only to Texas REALTORS®. Find all your forms on zipForm and at texasrealestate.com/realtorforms.

Contract closeup

WHAT IF THE SELLER'S DISCLOSURE NEEDS TO BE REVISED?

When your seller client fills out the *Seller's Disclosure Notice* (TAR 1406), he discloses what he knows about the property. But what happens if something about the property changes after the form is filled out?

While the Texas Property Code does not create a continuing duty or obligation to update the *Seller's Disclosure Notice*, if information in the notice is no longer true, the seller may have a common-law duty to correct any misstatements or false impressions.

Whether it's a recent storm damaging the roof or the seller learning about a previously unknown problem with the property, the additional information can be noted in the *Update to Seller's Disclosure Notice* (TAR 1418). The form has space for the seller to rewrite relevant sections of the seller's disclosure, ensuring he is providing the most current information about the property.

Legal Hotline

800-873-9155

We sometimes get calls about whether listing brokers can make offers of compensation listed in the MLS dependent on some other criteria, such as applying only to full-price offers or that a buyer's agent must accompany the buyer to the first showing. Those arrangements violate MLS rules, which state that offers of compensation must be unconditional except that the cooperating broker must be the procuring cause of the sale. Accompanying the buyer to the first showing may be a factor in determining procuring cause, but a listing broker is prohibited from making the commission conditional on that factor alone.

—David Jones,
associate counsel



IS A REAL ESTATE LICENSE REQUIRED?

Test how familiar you are with the Texas Real Estate Commission's rules for real estate licensing in Texas.

1. True or False?

An attorney licensed in Texas does not need a real estate license to act as a real estate broker in Texas.

2. True or False?

Selling or leasing mineral or mining interests in Texas does not require a real estate license.

3. True or False?

You can receive money for referrals made when your license is inactive.

4. True or False?

Your unlicensed assistant can unlock the door for a potential buyer if you're not there.

5. True or False? A real estate license is required to call an auction involving real property.



Legal Q&A

It's the last day of my buyer's option period. The buyer and seller are still negotiating repairs and want to extend the option period. How do we do that?

Use TREC's *Amendment* to the contract (TAR 1903, TREC 39-8) and fill in an amount acceptable to both parties in Paragraph 6. There must be an amount included in Paragraph 6. For instance, putting "\$0" in the blank may risk the extension being held unenforceable.

Image & Photos: ney, Michal Kowalski, Stock-Asso/Shutterstock.com

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES IF A SELLER, LANDLORD, OR AGENT FAILS TO COMPLY WITH LEAD-BASED PAINT DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS?

A seller, landlord, or agent who fails to satisfy lead-based paint disclosure requirements can be sued for triple the amount of damages and may be subject to civil and criminal penalties.

Any broker or sales agent receiving compensation from the seller or landlord—either directly or through the listing broker—is considered an agent for purposes of lead-based paint disclosure requirements.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1) **True.** A licensed attorney in Texas can do everything a broker can do except sponsor agents, act as the designated broker for a business entity, or participate in commission splits. 2) **True.** 3) **False.** 4) **False.** 5) **False.** A licensed auctioneer is not required to have a real estate license to call an auction for real property in Texas, but the auctioneer may not act as a broker or sales agent, such as by preparing a written agreement for the transaction.

TEXAS REBUILDS



Texas REALTOR® magazine traveled from the Coastal Bend to the Golden Triangle to trace the impacts of Hurricane Harvey a year later.

Story and photos
by Michael Schrantz

Rubbing her eyes, Rebecca Bagby tries to refocus on the point she was making.

She's head-to-toe in the familiar neon pink of South Texas beachwear, but the leaning palm tree on her T-shirt sits alongside *Rockport Strong* in white text.

Nearly a year after Hurricane Harvey made landfall on August 25, 2017, in Rockport, Bagby is sitting among fellow REALTORS® in the local association office, recalling

the aftermath of the storm.

"It's hurricane brain," Bagby says, abandoning her thought.

Rockport and its residents were left reeling when Harvey's 145-mile-per-hour winds sheared buildings from foundations and uprooted 100-year-old trees.

"All the familiarity was gone," says Gina Kirkland, an agent with Luce Properties in Rockport.

"We had no street signs, no landmarks," says Bagby, an agent with Key Allegro

Real Estate Company in Rockport. "I went out on a showing and got lost."

Hurricane Harvey was the strongest storm to hit the Texas Coast since Celia in 1970, with hours of extreme winds and storm surges as high as 12 feet above ground level. It was the largest rainfall event in U.S. history, delivering a year's worth of rain in a handful of days in some places. Historic wind damage and catastrophic flooding touched so many Texans that nearly 60% of

residents in the 24-county affected area reported property damage or loss of income, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation/Episcopal Health Foundation survey.

A year later, 70% of affected residents say their lives are largely or almost back to normal, according to a recent survey from the same foundations. But like the storm itself, the lasting effects are localized, with each community defining for itself what resiliency looks like.



■ *New construction progresses along the highway through Port Aransas a year after Hurricane Harvey.*

The Coastal Bend: Rockport, Port Aransas, and Corpus Christi



The day after landfall in Rockport, Dayne and Parkie Luce, of Luce Properties, visited what remained of their office in the bayside neighborhood of Key Allegro. Harvey had flattened the structure, blowing out walls and chewing wood to splinters. The rest of the neighborhood—beachy homes sitting on waterfront created by a web of canals—fared little better.

The Luces, along with their staff and agents, began the cleanup process. “All these people came and rolled up their sleeves and helped us extract documents,” says Dayne Luce.

The new Luce Properties building was constructed in the same footprint and painted the same signature bright blue as before. The difference is the strength of the new construction, up to the latest codes and security against the next storm.

“The new building codes proved themselves very worthy,” says Keith McMullin,

broker with Port Aransas Realty. Older homes in Port Aransas were heavily damaged by Harvey, according to McMullin, but newer homes made it through with fewer issues. In fact, McMullin sees the contrast as a potential boon: How well new construction weathered a storm like Harvey could put buyers at ease who before shied away from the risks of owning on the Gulf Coast.

Planned and started in the 1960s, Rockport’s Key Allegro had a high proportion of aging construction. Its earlier generations of buyers are now in their 70s and 80s, and the scale of the damage meant not all of them could rebuild.

“Their grown kids came to get mom and pop out of there, which created listings,” Luce says. “And lots sell quickly.”

Protracted claims processes with the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) over payouts left some homeowners in limbo.

Luce stops to compose himself while describing the plight of a longtime Rockport resident in his 90s who raised a family there, was a local judge, and wants to move back but can’t fix his totaled home with TWIA’s offer.

Adding to frustrations, Harvey circling back to Houston and Hurricane Irma making landfall in Florida two weeks later drew field adjusters for insurance companies away from the Coastal Bend, stalling progress on claims or miring them in missing paperwork.

In these popular vacation communities, however, the recovery isn’t the same for everyone. “People are buying for-now homes while waiting for TWIA to come through for their main homes,” Luce says.

“Single-family homes and residential lots have gone up in price,” McMullin says.

But a workforce housing shortage is growing direr in some communities.

“We’ve always had a chal-

lenge with workforce housing,” McMullin says of Port Aransas. “Harvey made a bad problem exponentially worse.”

In Rockport, Dayne Luce has noticed the impact on commercial activity. “All the entry-level employees are gone,” he says.

Workers and the commercial sector were also affected in Corpus Christi, which sustained less property damage but lost power for days. It was the first time property manager and commercial appraiser Bryan Johnson saw a natural disaster cause widespread late payments. “There was a large segment of people who couldn’t go back to work if they wanted to,” he says, describing the businesses that couldn’t open without power.

Johnson, who’s the chairman of the Corpus Christi Association of REALTORS®, estimates Corpus Christi is nearly back to its pre-Harvey state, but the smaller Coastal Bend communities that suffered the brunt of the damage still have years of recovery ahead.

Tray Bates, 2019 Texas Association of REALTORS® chairman and commercial broker in Corpus Christi, says he’s still working with some clients restoring property, but the damage isn’t comparable to what communities like Port Aransas, Ingleside, and Rockport have gone through.

“Emotions are still raw for those who have been affected by this disaster,” Bates says. “We recently visited with REALTORS® in some of these affected communities, and we recognize the need to be better prepared in order to serve members during times of disaster.”

“What comes back is built better than it was before,” McMullin says of Port Aransas’s progress. It felt like there was a fog hovering over the town for six months, he says. But investors recognize the promise of the area, with a rush of commercial activity




■ **TOP/CENTER** The Port Aransas Volunteer Fire Department and a home yards away from the beach in Port Aransas haven't yet finished repairing storm damage in August.

and capital flowing now.

The construction across the highway from McMullin's office is an example of the changes underway in Port Aransas before Harvey hit. Luxury, master-planned communities are rising along the Mustang Island beach below Port Aransas: Palmilla Beach, Cinnamon Shore, Sunflower Beach, and their successive phases.

"Ten years ago, we didn't have places nice enough for some people," McMullin says. "That's changed. But the charm of Port A will stay the same."

Houston: Cinco Ranch and Meyerland



It didn't matter if the home got 2 inches of water or 2 feet, it had to be mucked—stripped of drywall, carpets, cabinets, and anything else soaked through by Harvey flood waters.

Homeowners got help mucking from anyone searching to be useful after days feeling trapped and powerless, says Jennifer Wauhob, an agent with Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Gary Greene in Katy. "It was kind of amazing to watch."

The first flooded and mucked homes came onto the market a month or two later, Wauhob says, and investors were ready to absorb the properties and quickly start renovations. For owners who opted to rebuild, it could be a longer process. "I have friends who flooded and just finished their kitchen in the last 60 days," Wauhob says.

Wauhob does a good portion of her business in Cinco Ranch,

■ **BOTTOM** An excavator scrapes dirt away from the cement edge of Brays Bayou near Fondren Road in Southwest Houston in August. More than \$400 million dollars of work is planned to reduce flooding risk in the Brays Bayou watershed.

a master-planned community 25 miles west of downtown Houston. The neighborhood lies in the flood pool behind Barker Reservoir—a fact that was virtually unknown before the Army Corps of Engineers chose to flood the area to save homes elsewhere during Harvey.

While TREC's *Seller's Disclosure Notice* includes questions about whether a home is in a floodplain or has previously flooded, flood pools are not mentioned.

In addition to explaining the liability issues related to disclosure, Wauhob encourages sellers to provide as much documentation as possible related to testing, remediation, or any other work done to the property.

Many listings behind Barker Reservoir have language related to Harvey in the descriptions—*never flooded, only flooded in Harvey, immediately remediated*, and so forth—but not all sellers want to talk about it.

"We're required to be truthful in our advertising," Wauhob says. "We also represent the seller's best interest, and as listing agents, can only state what they authorize." If it's not addressed, whether the home flooded is often the first question from potential buyers. And buyers surprised by a history of flooding when reviewing the seller's disclosure might decide to walk away.

For Cinco Ranch, where homes are being built back just as they were and few markers of flooding remain, the memory of Harvey will likely fade quicker than in Meyerland, where owners are raising their homes to escape flood waters, either by choice or through force of regulation.

Much of Meyerland along south-



west Houston's Brays Bayou lies in the 100-year floodplain, which means the area has a 1% chance of being inundated by a flood in any given year. Meyerland has flooded three times in three years: the Memorial Day flood in 2015, the Tax Day flood in 2016, and Hurricane Harvey.

"After Memorial Day, we put our house back together at grade because that was the worst storm ever and our house had never flooded before," says Ed Wolff, president of Beth Wolff, REALTORS®. "After

exceed 50% of the pre-Harvey value may be given a substantial damage determination by the city. Whereas existing homes in the 100-year floodplain are exempt from elevation requirements, substantially damaged homes must be built back to meet city floodplain regulations, including elevation. As of September 1, that requirement is 2 feet above the floodplain for new construction and existing homes that have been expanded by more than a third. The requirement was also extended

floodplain regulations acutely.

In Meyerland, the sound of air compressors marks the progress of construction. New builds, elevated existing homes, and homes at grade that may have never flooded could all line the same street.

"I do think that there's going to be a nice mixture of homes," Wolff says, which would offer a wide variety of price points and options.

Older homes without a history of flooding competing against new, elevated construction will further complicate how home values are established after Harvey, according to Wolff.

Current work on Brays Bayou and Houston's passage of a \$2.5 billion bond for flood projects should reduce the likelihood Meyerland floods again.

"It's never going to solve a Harvey," Wolff says. "There's no way to build out of a Harvey."

Golden Triangle: Vidor and Lumberton



Turning off Main St. and into her daughter's north Vidor neighborhood, Jeanette Winfrey repeats herself: This neighborhood wasn't supposed to flood. South Vidor, where she lives, sure. But not here.

Wexford Park is still visibly recovering from Harvey and the release of water from Dam B on the Neches River by the Army Corps of Engineers. Debris lingers on the edges of some streets. FEMA trailers block the yards of those who accepted them, while RVs and campers line the driveways of those who preferred to make their own arrangements.

Winfrey stops in front of the home her husband, a local builder, completed for their daughter just four years ago and points out the slope up from the street grade to the home's foundation. Although the lot isn't in a high-risk zone and the neighborhood wasn't supposed to flood, they still

brought in truckloads of dirt to raise the grade.

But Harvey didn't respect best-laid plans. Winfrey's two children and their families all live in the same neighborhood and had to evacuate. Their homes spent more than a week with several feet of water inside.

Nearly a year later, construction equipment is visible through the uncovered floor-level windows, but Winfrey's daughter may move back into her home soon.

Ben Rodriguez is headed back toward Lumberton after giving a tour of what's happened since Harvey when a burst of heavy August rain overwhelms the truck's wipers. Highway 96 washes from view and traffic contracts in caution.

"It rained like this for three days straight," says Rodriguez, broker/owner of Triangle Real Estate. Given a moment, he corrects himself: "It was pretty much five days of rain."

Lumberton effectively became an island after miles of floodwater closed the highways north and south of the town.

Rodriguez got his real estate license in 2005, the year Hurricane Rita hit. The weeks and months after were his first experience with the cycle of investors, renovations, and resales in the wake of natural disasters. Then Humberto hit in 2007 and Ike in 2008.

Harvey was 10 times stronger than those, he says. "Everything fell into place to make it a natural disaster no one is going to forget," Rodriguez says.

Dealing with clients after a disaster is not normal real estate, Winfrey says.

"You can't tell someone their house is worth \$20,000 when they've worked their entire life to build it. You're dealing with more emotion than money," she says.

Many hit by flooding around Lumberton weren't in a position to sell and move, Rodriguez says. "We already had a shortage of homes under

"Houston kept the spotlight, but the rural communities without the same voice—that's where a lot of the damage is that people don't know about."

—Bryan Johnson

Harvey, we elevated our house 6 feet in the air because it had been proven it could happen more than once."

Wolff's Meyerland home took on 18 inches of water in the Memorial Day flood and 3 feet during Harvey, and while he could have built back at ground level like he did in 2015, he applied for the city's substantial damage determination to access Small Business Administration (SBA) financing for the work to lift his 1950s home clear of the threat of future flooding.

Homes in the 100-year floodplain where the cost to repair them would equal or

to the 500-year floodplain, which has a 0.2% chance of flooding in any given year.

The new floodplain regulations may be more feasible for his neighbors in Meyerland, Wolff says, but there are areas where they'll represent a significant challenge for owners.

People who owe more than what they'll get from insurance and their property value combined, those who live in areas where property values are such that flood insurance payouts can't get them back to a habitable home, and owners whose flood insurance premiums are set to skyrocket will all feel the pressure of new

“Harvey was the worst we’ve ever seen. I don’t really know how you plan for it.”

—Ben Rodriguez

\$200,000.” But available homes aren’t the only factor. The first year of flood insurance premiums must be paid upfront—a lump sum that can kill deals for homes with a history of flooding or at the lower end of the market. “You can’t make a \$4,500 payment work for a \$150,000 home,” Rodriguez says.

“If it was monthly, that could help, but people either won’t buy homes with an upfront flood insurance cost like that or they forgo the insurance if it’s not required,” he says.

Older Lumberton neighborhoods with a history of flooding have still attracted attention from investors,

which Rodriguez attributes to the strength of the market before Harvey. “Homes are being renovated and rejuvenated that wouldn’t be otherwise,” he says.

There’s new construction, too. “There are still people putting money in the ground here,” Rodriguez says. Some of what’s being built or coming back is raised, but with dirt and grading.

When conversation turns toward the future and how to prepare for the next storm, Rodriguez says, people tend to focus on things they’d do differently once it’s bearing down—*I’m going to leave sooner. I’m going to grab this*—rather than how to

prepare for the next Harvey.

After storms this June brought flooding back to Vidor, Winfrey questions whether Harvey altered the region’s drainage pattern. So much sand was pushed around by the storm, Rodriguez says, that it looked like an excavator came through.

“Areas have flooded since Harvey that never did before,” he says.

Rodriguez and Winfrey are looking ahead to another effect of Harvey: local budget shortfalls. Property damage from flooding slashed the value of the tax base.

“That’s what’s really going to determine how the recovery is going to go,” Rodriguez says.

Winfrey points to the renovated homes, families moving back, and new businesses as signs that things are headed in the right direction. A storm kicks up construction and investment, she says.

“Vidor as a whole will come back better,” Winfrey says.

MICHAEL SCHRANTZ is social media editor for the association.

Association Reviews Harvey Efforts

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the Texas Association of REALTORS® distributed more than \$3 million dollars through the Texas REALTORS® Relief Fund to members and consumers.

Since then, the association has reviewed its disaster response plan to improve upon processes for accepting and reviewing applications and better serve as a central resource in communication and mobilization efforts. The association has also moved to create separate disaster relief funds for members and consumers.

Supporting Future Disaster Relief Efforts

Through the REALTORS® Relief Foundation, the National Association of REALTORS® and members nationwide contributed to the rebuilding efforts of those affected by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017.

As the Carolinas cope with the impact of Hurricane Florence, donations can be made to the REALTORS® Relief Foundation at nar.realtor/rrf.

■ A lone chair sits on the deck of a Key Allegro home in Rockport.





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ACTIONS RELEVANT TO REALTORS® FROM THE AUGUST TREC MEETING

The Texas Real Estate Commission met in early August. Here are a few actions from TREC's meeting you should know about.

Realty can be used in team names

An adopted amendment to TREC rule 535.155, Advertisements, removes the term *realty* from the list of prohibited terms in a team name. A team's name must still end in the words *team* or *group* to adhere to TREC rules.

Directional signs get an exception to advertising rules

A directional sign won't be considered an advertisement if it includes only directional arrows or directional arrows and the broker's name or logo.

New form adopted: Notice of Seller's Termination of Contract

This new form is for the seller to notify the buyer the contract is terminated because either:

1. The buyer failed to deliver the earnest money within the time required under Paragraph 5 of the contract and before the time the seller provided this notice to buyer; or
2. Another reason identified by the paragraph number of the contract or addendum.

Once available, this form will be added to texasrealestate.com/realtorforms, zipForm, and other forms vendors as quickly as possible.

TREC will not create its own earnest money form

TREC in May proposed creating a new earnest money form, but formally withdrew the form at this meeting after receiving comments from members like you.

TAR continues to offer to members its *Release of Earnest Money* form, one of the 136 forms available exclusively to Texas REALTORS® at texasrealestate.com/realtorforms.

Proposals from the meeting

The proposed form and rule changes outlined here were posted in the Texas Register in late August, and the public had 30 days to comment by contacting general.counsel@trec.texas.gov.

The earliest these proposed changes could be adopted is at TREC's November meeting.

Proposed form revisions

In addition to the revisions proposed in May, TREC proposed additional revisions recommended by the Broker Lawyer Committee to the *Third Party Financing Addendum*. If adopted at the November TREC meeting, the revisions would:

- Revise the current language in Paragraph B2, Property Approval, to require that if the buyer wants to terminate the contract under this paragraph, the buyer must give the seller written notice not later than three days before the contract's closing date and must provide the seller written evidence of lender's determination.
- Reformat the form for consistency with other TREC-promulgated forms.
- Change the last sentence of Paragraph E2 so that it states "... brokers and sales agents provided under Broker Information."

TREC also proposed additional revisions to the *Notice of Buyer's Termination of Contract*. If adopted at the November TREC meeting, the revisions would:

- Add a statement that a buyer terminating the contract under the Property Approval section of the *Third Party*



Financing Addendum has delivered to the seller a written statement from the lender as to why the property isn't approved in line with the proposed changes to the *Third Party Financing Addendum*.

- Add a box to check if the buyer is terminating under Paragraph 3 of the *Addendum Concerning Right to Terminate Due to Lender's Appraisal*.
- Add a box to check if the buyer is terminating under Paragraph 6D of the contract because buyer's or lender's timely objections were not cured by the end of the cure period.

Finally, TREC proposed revisions to *Addendum Concerning Right to Terminate Due to Lender's Appraisal* recommended by the Broker Lawyer Committee to help make the options clearer. Learn more about how to use the current version of the addendum by searching "appraisal contingency addendum" on texasrealestate.com.

Proposed changes to 535.2, Broker Responsibility

TREC proposed changes to this section, which includes the following:

- A broker would have to designate anyone who leads, supervises, or directs a team in the brokerage as a delegated supervisor with TREC. In addition, the proposed changes would reduce the time frame when a license holder must be delegated as a supervisor to three months. Currently, a broker has to appoint someone as a delegated supervisor if he or she has or will be supervising for more than six months.
- The time frame that a broker or delegated supervisor has to respond to clients, agents, or other brokers would be reduced from three to two days.
- The time frame that a broker or delegated supervisor has to deliver TREC correspondence to their agents would be reduced from 10 to three days.
- In the section covering

records retention, the term "work files" would be deleted and replaced with "communications with parties to the transaction" for clarity on what should be retained.

- Brokers would have to add to their brokerage policies and procedures manual that brokers will ensure agents are geographically competent in the market area being served; and that brokers will ensure training or coaching for new agents when they undertake new tasks.

If these proposed changes are adopted at TREC's November meeting, TAR will update its *Model Brokerage Policies and Procedures Manual* as necessary, which gives brokerages instant compliance with TREC requirements to maintain written policies and procedures. The manual is \$99.99 plus tax, but if you have previously purchased the manual, you will receive the updates for free. Search for "manuals and guides" on texasrealestate.com to learn more.

Other proposed changes

A proposed amendment to TREC rule 535.101, Fees, would reduce the fee from \$20 to \$10 for an agent establishing or changing sponsorship.

A proposed amendment to TREC rule 535.191, Schedule of Administrative Penalties, moves several violations to a lower tier of penalties and adds several violations from recently adopted rules and those missing from the penalty matrix.

Have questions
about complying with
Texas Real Estate
Commission rules?
Call the association's
Legal Hotline at
800-873-9155. It's a
free member benefit for
all Texas REALTORS®.

Image: Faberr14/Shutterstock.com



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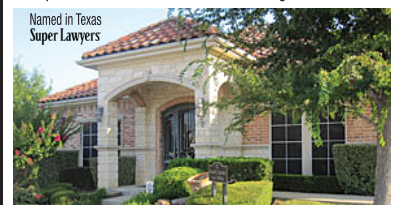
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WHAT HAPPENED IN SAN ANTONIO



A

The 2018 Texas REALTORS® Conference drew members from across the state to San Antonio for a distinguished slate of speakers, informative sessions and forums, special events, and valuable courses.

Opening Session keynote speaker Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour [A], the first African-American female combat pilot in the U.S. Armed Forces, headlined the first night of the conference, recounting lessons learned during her time flying a SuperCobra attack helicopter for the U.S. Marine Corps.

“Acknowledge the obstacles,” Armour said. “Don’t give them power.”

Governmental Affairs Forum keynote speaker Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick [B] discussed several real estate-related issues expected to be debated at the Texas Capitol next session, including property tax reform.

Texas REALTORS® also received a data-driven preview of the November general election from special guest Jeff Blaylock [C], publisher of Texas Election Source.



B



C



D



I AM A TEXAS REALTOR®

I PLEDGE TO BE HONEST AND ALWAYS PUT MY CLIENT'S INTERESTS FIRST. I GO BEYOND WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES. I FIGHT FOR HOMEOWNERS' RIGHTS. MY CLIENTS HAVE A LOT AT STAKE. I OWE IT TO THEM TO BE MORE THAN JUST AN ORDINARY REAL ESTATE AGENT. I VOLUNTEER IN MY COMMUNITY, BECAUSE I LIVE THERE, TOO. I WORK HARD TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE PEOPLE TO AFFORD HOMES. I TAKE COURSES TO INCREASE MY EXPERTISE, SO I CAN BETTER SERVE YOU AS A HOMEBUYER, SELLER, COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INVESTOR, OR RENTAL PROPERTY OWNER. I ABIDE BY A STRICT CODE OF ETHICS.



Kaki Lybbert [D], 2018 TAR Chairman, also addressed Texas REALTORS® at the Opening Session.

Tray Bates [F] was installed on Saturday night as the 2019 Chairman of the Texas Association of REALTORS® and was joined by his wife, Jessica, and his three sons.

The Texas Association of REALTORS® regional vice presidents [F] for 2019 were also installed Saturday.

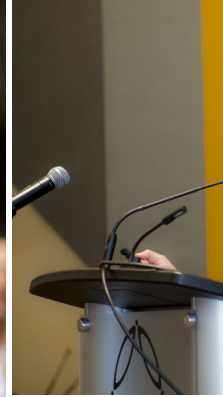


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Texas REALTORS® who attended TREPAC Night at the Alamo on Sunday heard from **San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg [G]**, who discussed the important role the Alamo has played in the city's history.

From the National Association of REALTORS®, **Chief Economist Lawrence Yun [H]** gave an economic update to the Global and Commercial Forum, and **Vice President of Information Technology Liz Sturrock** and **Project Manager Jason Normandin [I]** spoke during the Tech/MLS Forum about how blockchain technology could impact real estate.

At the YPN Night Out, winners of the **2018 REALTORS® to Watch** award [J] were recognized: from left, **Benjamin Rodriguez** of Beaumont, **Vanessa Dirks** of Lubbock, **Julie Reupke** of Corpus Christi, and **Kathy Wade-Turner** of Bryan-College Station. Award winner Cameron Willmann of Permian Basin is not pictured.

At the Board of Directors meeting, **2018 NAR President Elect John Smaby [K]** gave an update: "NAR is focusing on making REALTORS® more successful and profitable."

Meet your **2019 Texas Association of REALTORS® Leadership Team [L]**: **Secretary/Treasurer Marvin Jolly** of Plano, **Immediate Past Chairman Kaki Lybbert** of Denton, **Chairman Tray Bates** of Corpus Christi, **Chairman-Elect Cindi Bulla** of Amarillo, and **President/CEO Travis Kessler**.



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¹RateShield Approval locks your client's initial interest rate for up to 90 days on 30-year conventional, FHA and VA fixed-rate purchase loan products. Your client's exact interest rate will depend on the date they lock their rate. Once your client submits their signed purchase agreement, we'll compare their rate to our published rates for that date and re-lock their interest rate at the lower of the two rates for an additional 40 to 60 days. Additional conditions or exclusions may apply.

²Your client's participation in the Verified Approval program is based on an underwriter's comprehensive analysis of their credit, income, employment status, debt, property, insurance, appraisal and a satisfactory title report/search. If new information materially changes the underwriting decision resulting in a denial of the credit request, if the loan fails to close for a reason outside of Quicken Loans' control, or if the client no longer wants to proceed with the loan, their participation in the program will be discontinued. If the client's eligibility in the program does not change and their mortgage loan does not close, they will receive \$1,000. This offer does not apply to new purchase loans submitted to Quicken Loans through a mortgage broker. Additional conditions or exclusions may apply. Verified Approval within 24 hours of receipt of all requested documentation.

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HOW TO MEET YOUR HOME-SELLING GOALS

Whether you're selling your home for the first time or the fifth, your goals stay the same: Attract buyers and secure a good sales price. Take these simple steps to reach your home-selling goals.



PRICE IT RIGHT

A REALTOR® can access reliable market data to help you determine the right price for your home. And when your home is priced properly for the market, you will get more interest from buyers. A home priced too low for the market may mean a quicker sale, but it also means you'll be missing out on extra cash. Finding the sales price sweet spot is how you'll meet your goals.



MAKE IT LOOK NICE

You might be surprised at how many sellers don't de-clutter or make basic repairs before listing their home. Even in a seller's market, buyers won't make it past your listing photos if they are less appealing than others. Simple changes—like potted plants on the porch and a new coat of paint for the front door—can help make your home more marketable. Talk to your REALTOR® about what appeals to buyers in your market.



BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT SHOWINGS

A REALTOR® will try to accommodate your schedule, but you should be realistic about having potential buyers see your home. Weekend and evening showings are helpful for prospects with a 9-to-5 job. And if your area attracts people relocating, they might only be in town for a few days with a compressed schedule. Most important: Give buyers space. It's hard to get a feel for a property when an anxious seller is following you around during a showing. Your REALTOR® can help you meet buyers' showing expectations.



A REALTOR® can help you market your home effectively to attract buyers and secure a good sales price.

TAKE 5

BUSINESS TASKS MADE SIMPLE WITH TECH

You don't need to be an early adopter, living on the bleeding edge to increase your business through tech tools. No matter your skill level, here are five that will help you.

BACK UP YOUR TEXT MESSAGES

Emails are easy to add to a transaction record, but including relevant text-message conversations in that archive—in an accessible format— isn't so simple. If you have an iPhone and use the Messages app on a Mac with the same account as on the iPhone, you can view a conversation in the desktop Messages app and copy and paste it to a text document. Otherwise, try iExplorer (\$39) for Windows and Mac, CopyTrans (\$29) for Windows, or PhoneView (\$30) for Mac. Android users can create backups of conversations in their Gmail accounts using the free SMS Backup+ app.

MANAGE SOCIAL MEDIA

Buffer and Hootsuite consolidate your social media accounts so you can schedule, monitor, and analyze your activity in one place. They have Android and iOS apps and excel at broadcasting content to your connections. Their free plans let you connect three accounts and schedule up to 10 posts per account. Paid monthly plans, starting at \$15 for Buffer and \$29 for Hootsuite, add analytics, advanced scheduling options, and content assistance.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT NAME

You want a consistent online presence for your business. Make sure you can claim the same name for all your social media accounts and website URL with NameChk. It's a free service that checks the availability of usernames across the internet.

CREATE ENGAGING MARKETING

Canva enables you to create engaging visual content—social media graphics, fliers, brochures, postcards—with a simple drag-and-drop editor. The free plan requires you to provide or purchase images, while the \$12.95 monthly plan opens up the photo and illustration library.

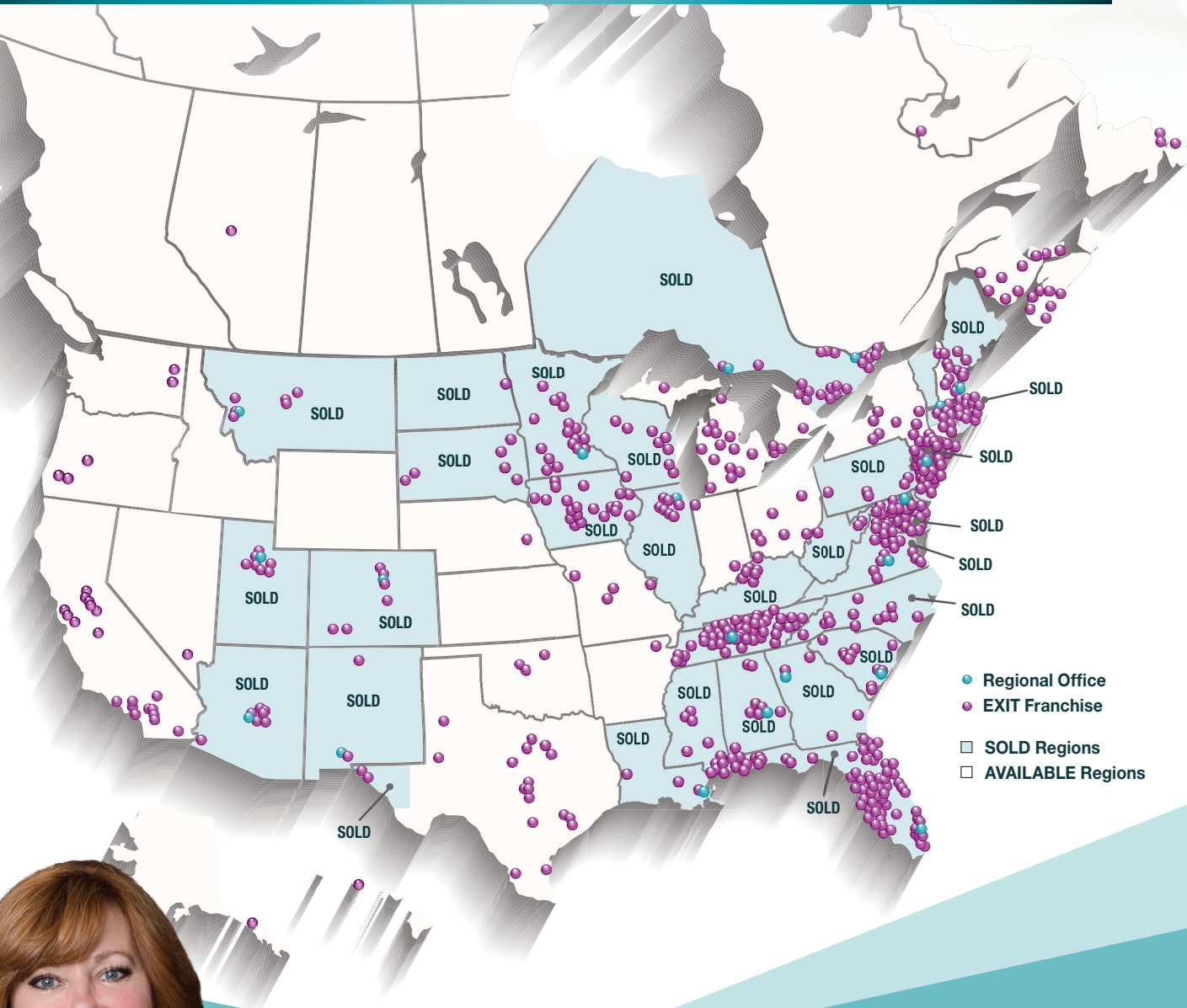
SEND SMARTER EMAILS

With email marketing services, you can send professional-looking, mobile-responsive messages to segments of your list—by location, whether they're buying or selling, etc.—that will improve your messages' effectiveness. You can also set up automated campaigns that not only send on a schedule but can also trigger additional messages based on recipients' actions, such as opening or clicking on a link in the message. Popular email services MailChimp and Campaigner offer these and other features starting at \$10 and \$20 per month, respectively.



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